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Opinion

www.postvillenewspaper.com

The benefits of hugging go far beyond skin deep; give hugs generously



Sarah Brainard Marsh
Health Columnist

How long has it been since you were wrapped, or wrapped someone, in a hug? It feels wonderful to sense the love of a friend or family member in an embrace, but the benefits of hugging go beyond skin deep. The simple gesture of a hug is incredibly multi-dimensional. Studies have shown that hugging and touching (such as holding hands or sitting close together) can relieve stress, lower

blood pressure, lower heart rate, and increase oxytocin; all resulting in protection against heart disease—the number one cause of death of women in the U.S. Hugs can also positively effect our emotional, spiritual, and mental well being—which you feel immediately when embraced.

We are drawn to baby's soft skin and snuggle them close naturally. We know without being told, that babies need touch to thrive. Infants in a Korean orphanage who received just 15 minutes of additional massage and eye-to-eye contact gained more weight and grew faster than those who did not receive the extra attention. Babies need contact to grow and develop normally, but the need for touch does not end once adulthood is reached. More and more research is being done on something we

seek by instinct—the sharing of touch.

A study by the British Heart Foundation concluded that contact, such as a hug, at the beginning of the day could carry over and protect you from stress and other health risks throughout the day. The study also found that when friends or spouses talked about an upsetting issue, holding hands kept heart rates twice as low and blood pressure significantly lower than those who did not touch.

The Mayo Clinic states that while research is not conclusive, some of the benefits of therapeutic touch—also known as massage—include: reduction in anxiety—especially in those trying to quit smoking, decrease in pain for those with fibromyalgia and migraines, decrease in labor pain, stress and anxiety, better weight gain in premature babies, better response

to medication in children with diabetes, decrease in muscle soreness especially after physical activity and sports, enhanced immune system function, decreased anxiety and fatigue in cancer patients, and improved self image in children and adults with physical disabilities and terminal illness. While these studies did not include the simple use of hugging, many of the claims can be related directly back to touch from another person.

Certainly we do not need scientific research to tell us that hugging and massage are good for us! We feel good when we share an embrace, back rub, or hold the hand of someone we love. The body releases two "feel good" hormones called serotonin and dopamine when we have contact with another human. Although hugs are free and should be given away much

more freely (the French spend three times more time touching than Americans!) another option is to schedule a massage with a licensed Massage Therapist.

Massage is not just a way to pamper yourself, although it certainly does reduce stress and enhance relaxation. Therapists are trained to stimulate blood flow through the soft tissues of the body. Blood carries all the necessary elements such as oxygen, protein, water and other nutrients, for healing the cells of the body. This explains the physical response of sore muscles and joints to massage, but only the sense of touch can explain the mental and emotional response of shared touch.

One cute website states that hugs are "health food" and we should use them to feed our soul. The author claims that along with the 14 different kinds of hugs there are, hugging is: all-natural, organic, naturally sweet, contains no pesticides, preservatives, or genetically-engineered ingredients, is non-fattening, carbohydrate-free, and 100 percent wholesome. The author recommends we get four hugs a day for survival, eight hugs a day for maintenance, and 12 hugs a day for growth. Seems like a simple order for better health!

Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor:

Immigrants are still an asset

The U. S. population currently exceeds 303.1 million representing a 22% increase since 1990 with much of this growth driven by immigration.

Although not supported by the date, the media purports that these aliens drive crime rates, are responsible for welfare rolls and steal jobs.

Illegal immigrants doubled to 12 million between 1994 and 1995, but according to the Department of Justice, violent crimes and property crimes actually decreased 34.2% and 26.4% respectively, during the same period.

Collective and recent research indicates that immigrants are five times less likely to commit crimes or to be jailed than the natives.

Contrary to popular belief, national welfare caseloads have fallen by 60% as illegal immigration has risen.

The National unemployment rate is 4.7% and job growth continues apace. Immigrants are not stealing jobs, but rather filling them. As consumers and entrepreneurs, they are contributing to the economic growth of the United States.

Illegal immigration, however, is not without its costs specifically in border communities and those states with large public benefits. Also, post-9/11 makes it necessary to know who is in our country mandating better regulations for cross-border labor flows, not ending them.

The ideal resolution is to provide legal ways for people to come and work. With the Bracero guest-worker program of the 1950's, illegal entries declined to a trickle. A similar program today could be just as effective while serving our homeland security and economic interests. The data and evidence shows that an immigrant is still an asset to the U. S.

Dale Siems

Charles City

REAP Committee scheduled for this Friday, August 1

The Clayton County REAP Committee Meeting is scheduled for Friday August 1, 2008 at the Osborne Welcome Center 4:00 p.m.

REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection. It is a program in the State of Iowa that invests in, as its name implies, the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources. REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate.

Several REAP grant opportunities exist through this program with cities eligible to apply through a competitive grant process.

REAP funds go into eight different programs based upon a percentage that are specified in the law. The eight different program areas include conservation education, DNR open spaces, city parks and open spaces, soil and water enhancement, county conservation, DNR

land management, historical resources, and roadside vegetation. parkland expansion and multi-purpose recreation developments which are typical projects funded under this REAP program.

Here in Clayton County, the county REAP committee coordinates REAP projects, reviews and updates the county REAP plan, promotes the sale of natural resource license plates and helps direct future REAP projects. REAP applications require county grant endorsement. The grant deadline is August 15, 2008.

All REAP grant applications must be presented to the committee for endorsement on Friday August 1, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. at Osborne Welcome Center.

Contact Darla Kelchen, Director Clayton County Economic Development Group at 563-245-2201 or Tim Engelhardt, Director Clayton County Conservation Board to attend the REAP meeting for grant endorsement.

prospect of all future relief, and impose criminal sentences and removal orders simultaneously. To speed the process up, the court appointed attorneys were required to represent groups of 10 to 20 or more individuals, and more than 90 individuals were processed by the court in a single day.

The American Immigration Lawyers Association wrote to the U.S. District Judge who apparently authorized these expedited procedures, Chief Judge Linda R. Reade, expressing our deep concerns with the process. Chief Judge Reade subsequently said that "the immi-

gration lawyers do not understand the federal criminal process as it relates to immigration charges." It would be hard to overstate our respectful disagreement with that assertion.

It is precisely because immigration lawyers understand the complexity of the interplay between immigration law and criminal charges that we have recoiled so forcefully at this new approach. Leveraging excessive criminal charges through an exploding plea bargain (sign

Guest Editorial
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